

## **Saint Mary's Church, Long Newton Reports to Parish AGM April 2014**

---

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Thanks be to God for another year at Saint Mary's. We can look back on many highlights; a new cycle of prayer visiting, our first Alpha Course for many years, a visit from Bishop Mark in June, our first outdoors Godzone service, a series of visiting speakers from local Christian charities, a barnstorming Harvest supper...

Add to that the continuing excellence we see in our Sunday services each week and the ongoing effective ministry in things like home groups, Tuesday @ 10, Little Ted, the drop-in, the community lunch, involvement at the school and so on.

Add to that the various groups that meet to oversee the ongoing health of church life; the communications group, the worship committee, the MDT and the PCC.

That's a lot of hours of dedicated and prayerful service. Thank God for the excellent team at Saint Mary's.

In 2013, there were four baptisms, three weddings and six funerals. Maurice Richardson and Bel Simblet lost close family members and we said farewell to Marie Hall who was a member of Saint Mary's after a long illness.

But 2013 was overshadowed of course by the sudden illness, brave battle and sad death of Dee Palmer-Jones. It is impossible to review the year without giving this prominence; Dee embodied the rejuvenated soul of Saint Mary's. Her illness and death took us all on a journey of faith. She was involved in just about everything and I am sure we are still quietly grieving four months on. We certainly miss her.

Now that some time has passed, there is a bit more space for the questions which get put to one side in the immediate need to grieve and offer consolation. Why so young? Why such a lovely woman? Why such a key church member? Why were our prayers not answered in the way we had hoped?

I have asked these questions many times and have as yet no answers to any of them. I accept that I may never understand until I too enter eternity. Over the years Christians have tried to make sense of the confusion, dismay (or joy or relief) that they feel when particular things happen after they have prayed for something specific.

All I know is that first of all, we have lost a very good friend, and secondly, God is always good and can still be trusted.

As we move ahead into 2014, we do so not only with the God of Good Friday but supremely with the God of Easter Sunday.

*John Lambert*

## **CHURCHWARDEN'S FABRIC REPORT**

The building remains in very good general condition.

During 2013 we had the Nave floor stripped and re-sealed, which happens approximately every 5 years. Last year this cost £807.

We also incurred some cost in connection with the heating system, the most significant being that a new circulation pump was required and that cost £1,224.

We were grateful for a new storage rack that was constructed and installed by Gareth Attwood in 2013.

*Christine Ayers*

## **MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

The MDT prayerfully considers what God is calling Saint Mary's to do, encourages every-member ministry and thinks strategically about refocusing or resourcing existing ministries.

In 2013 Saint Mary's MDT dealt with the following things:

- Alpha at the Wilson Centre
- Prayer visiting
- Bishop Mark's visit on 16th June
- Back to Church / Harvest event
- Strategy for reaching out to newcomers
- Strategy for developing fellowship within the church
- Planning an outreach day for autumn 2014
- A spreadsheet mapping all the ministries at Saint Mary's
- Preparing the ground for growth

The final item highlighted "sharing faith with others" as our main mission priority for 2014 and the MDT will be looking at ways to encourage that this year.

I am grateful to Kath Snowdon who stepped down from MDT at the beginning of 2013 and to Kathy Beaumont, Brian Wake, Janet Russell, Steven Firth, Jennifer Meadows and Mark Nile who have served on the MDT throughout 2013.

*John Lambert*

## **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

The worship committee has met 6 times since the last annual meeting. It is presently much diminished in every way with the great loss of Dee and the resulting absence

of Ian. Dee's inspiration and innovative ideas are sadly missed. Numbers in each meeting have varied between 5 and 2 with 3 being the median size.

The committee is responsible for choosing the themes and readings for the Sunday services in Ordinary Time, John Lambert being responsible for festivals plus Lent and Advent. John planned the series of services under the title 'Our Great Salvation'. The committee followed this with a complete change and a series of talks during the summer months, bringing in speakers from various charities and groups supported by the church. From September 'The Gifts of the Spirit' was selected as the topic and then after the Christmas season we looked at St Peter's 1st letter.

As well as planning the sermon topics the committee has also looked at special services including those for Harvest, Christmas and the extra services for Holy Week, including the Agape Supper on Maundy Thursday, Lent and Advent. Due to poor communication the arranged service for Ascension Day didn't take place and there was confusion over the time of the Good Friday film.

The committee has also looked more widely at how worship can be improved at Saint Mary's. Some suggestions have included the choral group singing from within the body of the church; communion being taken at the communion rail, and attempts to be made to synchronise the readings on the screen with the pew Bibles. This last point hasn't been resolved - perhaps more input is needed from the congregation.

Much time has been spent during the year on the subject of prayer. Suggestions have included moving the prayer table into the nave; providing prayer cards and aids to prayer and providing some help for those leading intercessions and praying with individuals after the service.

Closer links and better communication with All Saints were explored. These could include involvement in Messy Church and swapping leadership of services. Thank you to all who have made suggestions and given encouragement to those leading services, leading prayers and preaching. We have tried to do our best.

*Jenny Braddy*

## **GODZONE**

GodZone is a service held twice a term, planned and executed by the church and school together. In it, the whole school and about 20 parents or carers come into church in school time. We start with worship, then have a talk, then split up into zones such as praise, learning, prayer, sorry, thanksgiving, giving, blessing, belonging, worry. Then we come back together for prayer and more worship, ending with a drink and a snack. This ends the school day. The same team plans and runs the Christingle service.

The topics since last year have been:

- May 22nd - Outdoor GodZone around the village on "The road to Emmaus" ending with worship on the green, and ice cream from the van.
- June 17th - "Moving on" based on Abraham and Sarah

- October 14th - Harvest. The parable of the fig tree
- November 13th - Peace. Jesus in the boat
- December 1st - Christingle. The church was even more packed than usual.
- January 22nd - Joy. The prodigal's brother. Included worship dance for the first time (girls and boys!)
- March 19th - Our first GodZone baptism. Baptism of Jesus.

We haven't stood still this year, going outdoors, doing a praise dance and having a baptism being notable firsts.

Of course none of this would be possible without a large, dedicated and creative team, who work together extremely well, and have fun in planning and execution. So I take this opportunity to thank them all on behalf of the church.

*John Taylor*

## **PASTORAL TEAM**

Our team consists of Rev. John Lambert, Doris Wright, Jennifer Meadows, Jean Barr and Kath Snowdon.

We visit anyone in the Parish and help them in any way we can. Their names will have been referred to us through a variety of sources and we take a card and flowers when appropriate.

*Sonia Wade*

## **COMMUNITY LUNCH**

Long Newton Community Lunch, organised by members of Saint Mary's congregation, has been running for several years and is proving to be a popular event. Twenty-five to thirty people come regularly each month to enjoy eating a meal together and to catch up on local news and family events. From time to time there have been other visitors e.g. firemen who were working in the village and inmates from Kirklevington prison who were working in the Wilson Centre. All have been made welcome.

Meals generally consist of a main course of soup with rolls, a pudding, followed by tea/coffee. There is no set charge for the meal however donations are gratefully received to help cover food costs. Thanks to generous donations the Community Lunch is self-supporting and it has been possible to have a number of special lunches throughout the year e.g. Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter and a Summer Special.

Janet Taylor, Edwina Bainbridge and Cheryl Moore who man the kitchen and prepare meals, thoroughly enjoy this monthly event although it can be challenging at times. To be able to provide a congenial setting for any village member or friend of

the village to come along and share a meal with others is very rewarding. So many folk today eat most of their meals at home alone, which can be depressing.

The events would not run smoothly without the help and support of Tom and Audrey Whitfield and Maurice Bainbridge who set and wait on tables. John Taylor who provides the thought for the day reminds us that God is always at the heart of all we do.

We are always looking for anyone who feels that they could join us in any capacity either in the kitchen or helping at tables. If you are interested just have a word with Janet, Edwina or Cheryl. You would be made most welcome.

The next lunch will be on Thursday 10th April, 12.30pm at the Wilson Centre.

The Community Lunch is held on the second Thursday of each month at 12.30pm [except for August] at the Wilson Centre Long Newton.

*Cheryl Moore*

## **LITTLE TED**

The Wednesday morning Mother and Toddler group "Little Ted" has been going for over 6 years now.

The number attending each week do vary, but some weeks we have as many as 12. There is no charge for attendance.

At Christmas 2013 we had a children's Christmas party in church, with food and games. Father Christmas visited, thanks to Jim Askew.

We continue to meet every Wednesday in term time from 9.15 to 10.45 and have tea and coffee while the children play and get to know each other.

Sonia Wade and Edie Bainbridge continue to attend. They are both a great help and very much appreciated.

*Christine Ayers*

## **CHORAL GROUP**

The choral group continues to meet on Fridays, usually at Long Newton. Looking back we have had a busy year with highs and lows. We sang at a joint Easter Day evensong with the choir at Saint Mary's Norton which was well attended.

Following this we agreed to have joint carol services at both Saint Mary's churches just before Christmas, which was much enjoyed by those who attended as well as those in the-choirs.

In June, 11 of us attended a choral workshop at Richmond School run by John Rutter which was very enjoyable.

The latter half of the year was overshadowed by the acute illness and subsequent sad demise of Dee Palmer-Jones, one of our altos who is greatly missed. She gave me great encouragement and support in taking on the role of conductor two years ago and her humour and contribution to the group was immeasurable.

We sang at 23 services throughout the year at both All Saints and Saint Mary's, including three funerals and two weddings.

We always welcome new members, so if anyone would like to try singing in harmony please come along and give it a go.

*Kate Pickover*

## **COMMUNICATIONS GROUP**

The current members of the Communications Group are:

- Mike Shaw – Chairman
- Ann Smith – Secretary
- Antonia Palmer-Jones
- Ian Palmer-Jones
- Jane Firth
- Jim Askew
- Stephen Firth
- Pauline Brown

During the year Tom Whitfield and Julie Nile stood down from the group. We are grateful for their contributions over the past 2 years. Pauline Brown joined the group.

The group is responsible for all internal and external communications, in particular to ensure that services, events and activities are well publicised.

During the past year the group has met approximately every 2 months. The group reports to the PCC.

The group is responsible for:

- Weekly pew sheet
- Saint Mary's News
- Saint Mary's website
- Articles about Saint Mary's for "In Touch".
- Notice boards (inside Saint Mary's, in the porch, at the gate)
- External publicity in the Wilson Centre, village pubs, bus shelters etc.

The group maintains a calendar of services, events and activities, which is displayed in the vestry. This calendar is used to ensure that services and events are well publicised, that dates and times are clearly identified and clashes of dates are

avoided. Services and events are then publicised via the weekly pew sheet, posters displayed in various locations around the village, Saint Mary's News and the website.

The weekly pew sheet is the prime means of communication and the content has continued to increase throughout the year.

During the year the group has produced three editions of the newsletter, Saint Mary's News, which is distributed to every house in Long Newton in September, December and March.

This year, articles have been prepared for each edition of "In Touch". These articles have covered such topics as Holy Week at Saint Mary's 2013, a series of interviews with members of the congregation, prayer visiting in Long Newton and the community lunches.

A "Welcome to Long Newton" booklet was prepared as a newcomer's guide to Long Newton and contains practical information about the village and surrounding area. A copy of the booklet is personally delivered to people when they move into the village. Copies were also placed in Saint Mary's, the Londonderry arms and the Vane Arms. A reprint is planned for the near future.

A Facebook page has been created for Saint Mary's. The group also reviews the content of the website [www.stmaryslongnewton.co.uk](http://www.stmaryslongnewton.co.uk)

A contact list is maintained of those involved in the life of Saint Mary's.

If anyone would like to bring anything to the attention of the Communications Group, will they please contact either Ann Smith or Mike Shaw.

*Mike Shaw*

## **DEANERY SYNOD**

It has been another busy year for members of Deanery Synod. Agendas for meetings have contained many items ranging from - changes in personnel, finance, committee feedback, visiting speakers and Diocesan Synod reports. Churches across the Deanery host each meeting. Revd. David Brooke continues as Area Dean and John Taylor serves as Lay Chair.

The new Billingham Parish came into being during Holy Week last year. A new PCC has been formed and two new ministers, Revd. Bill Bravniner and Revd. Laura McWilliams, have been appointed. There is a very positive feeling in the new Parish however there are challenges and Revd. Bill asked for prayer for them as they move forward. Revd. Martin Anderson has been appointed to Saint Mary's and St Michael's churches and St Chad's, St James and St John's are beginning to have joint worship.

There has also been an appointment at Holy Trinity and St Mark's i.e. Revd. Paul Neville who is already enjoying being in his new post. Finally Revd. Sylvia Wilson took up her new position at St John's Egglecliffe last Sunday.

All members of Deanery Synod were saddened by the passing of Dee Palmer Jones last year, and prayers were said both for the life of Dee and for her family.

Finance Reports are a regular item on the agenda. Recently Margaret Vaughan reported that the Deanery remains in a reasonably good place with regard to payments of the Parish Share. The Parish Pledge System, which has now been in place for a couple of years, is proving to be effective. This system allows each Parish to pledge a realistic amount that they feel they can achieve. Only one or two Parishes are currently having difficulties.

There is usually a guest speaker at each meeting. Speakers this last year have included Bishop Mark – raising awareness around giving and the Night Stop Project, a representative from A Way Out – a local charity supporting young women and children, Viv Neville – sharing news about youth work across the Deanery and Revd. John Lambert who shared information about happenings at Saint Mary's and also gave a presentation on the Growing Leaders CPAS Course.

Key Issues arising from Diocesan Synod are also fed back by Fran Wood. A major item on their agenda is currently Church School Education. Other items included issues around credit companies, Church Urban Funding and the Princes Trust Community Bank. It was decided in Synod that it was better to have a presence within companies and to influence decisions from that position -the purpose being to move towards ethical standards. As a result continuation of investing was recommended.

Discussions around gender based issues continue. Encouraging news was given regarding the process of appointment of women bishops. Five principles have been adopted and all stages have been overwhelmingly approved up to now. It is hoped that the whole process will be completed before the new Parliament in 2015.

The installation of the new Bishop of Durham – Revd Paul Butler has also taken place.

There have been several Deanery Days throughout the year. Welcome and Prayer are to be the priorities for our area this year. Support for this is planned.

At the last meeting David Brooke presented a raft of material relating to the commemoration of World War 1. All PCC's will be giving time to discuss how they will proceed.

All meetings close with a time of prayer.

*Cheryl Moore*

## **DIOCESAN SYNOD**

The first Diocesan Synod was held on Saturday 18th May 2013 at Durham Johnson School. The presidential address by Bishop Mark was about being neighbour, being community and being locally focused, whilst the presentation by Christian Aid urged people to be globally focused. The Diocesan Accounts for 2012 were presented along with a short film summary. Archdeacon Stuart also led a discussion on 'The Church School of The Future'.

The second Diocesan Synod was held on Saturday 9th November 2013 at Durham Johnson school. There were presentations on The Northeast Economy and on Credit Bank and Unions. The Diocesan Budget proposals for 2014 were approved. The presidential address by Bishop Mark concerned the diocesan priorities for 2014 namely:

- to have our churches growing in number
- to have each congregation serving its local community.
- to have us all praying daily and are growing spiritually
- to have Income increasing and to demonstrating good stewardship of our resources so we are financially sound

These are broadly similar to those of recent years.

The texts of both presidential addresses can be read on the diocesan website.

*John Taylor*

## **WILSON CENTRE**

The Management Committee at the centre comprises of 10 members 3 of which are standing for re-election for 2014; Ian Downing, Andrew House and Heather Sadd. I (Ann Smith) joined the committee as a representative for Saint Mary's Church in December 2013. Members of the team are very pro-active both on the Management and Social aspects of the Centre especially Marion Garrett who is key to the running of the Centre. Marion has recently planted a memorial garden in memory of her husband Bob whom we all have memories of playing a very instrumental part in the Centre. Like many other village community centres the Wilson needs greater involvement from the villagers. The Management team works extremely hard to offer the best service to the village.

Management & Maintenance is constantly under review by the WCMC and the centre is adequately insured. All electrical and fire equipment has been appropriately inspected and certified. In the 2012-13 period, various essential exterior maintenance tasks were effected; and interior re-decoration was carried out by a Task Force from Kirklevington Prison in January. A donation of £100 to the prison has been made.

The WCMC has in place all requisite policies to ensure that good Centre management occurs and the centre was among the first village halls in the Tees Valley to receive the Hallmark Level 2 nationally-recognised award during this year.

Many of the social events have been very successful, they included;

- Dick Whittington Pantomime
- Fox Corner
- North Country Theatre Stage Production
- Saturday Big Breakfast
- Quiz & Chilli night
- Photography

Future events for 2014 are;

- Marie Little (Singer)
- St George's Day Celebrations
- Race Night
- Afternoon Tea

More events are in the early stages of planning for Autumn although costs of 'acts' invited to the centre are becoming increasingly expensive therefore other considerations now have to be reviewed.

Registrable accounts for 2012-13 have been approved by the committee for 2012-2013. Annual Returns were made to Companies House and the Charities Commission.

To encourage Wilson Centre members and non members to attend events staged a Membership Renewal Form together with the Annual General Meeting 2014 notice/reports were hand delivered in Long Newton.

The Centre was nominated for a National Lottery charitable award of up to £2000 under the "Environmental" category due to its employment of innovative ground source heating. The application was unsuccessful.

The Centre is a member of the Tees Valley Village Hall Network. Committee members regularly attend meetings of this body; helping keep the WCMC up-to-date with legislation and current issues affecting village halls.

*Ann Smith*